



## **King County Mental Health Chemical Abuse and Dependency Services Division 2002 Briefing Paper**

### **IMPACT OF STATE BUDGET CUTS ON INVOLUNTARY TREATMENT SERVICES FOR ADULTS**

#### **BACKGROUND:**

Psychiatric involuntary treatment of adults is authorized under Chapter 71.05 RCW. Under this law, each county is responsible for designating mental health professionals to perform the duties of investigating referrals for commitment and initiating the commitment process when necessary. In King County, this function, along with initial crisis outreach services for unenrolled individuals, is done by MHCADSD staff in the Crisis and Commitment Services Section (CCS).

Since 1998, the involuntary commitment law has been amended four times in attempts to expand criteria for short and long term commitment, and to ensure that potentially dangerous individuals with mental illness are evaluated and treated. At the same time, State Hospital beds are being cut, and reimbursement to King County Regional Support Network (RSN) for the services it provides, including involuntary treatment services, has been cut by millions of dollars.

#### **ISSUES/CHALLENGES:**

- Referrals to CCS have increased, while staff was cut in 2002 in response to the decrease in King County RSN revenue. King County Designated Mental Health Professionals (CDMHPs) detained 11% more individuals in 2002 than in 2001.
- In addition to increased referrals, CDMHPs must report more data to the State, and must gather more history in the course of their investigations, adding to their workload.
- Western State Hospital has periodically issued “census alerts” since January 2001 during which times it has refused to accept new patients who have been involuntarily detained by CCS, or committed for 90-days by King County Superior Court. King County has prepared to file suit against the State Mental Health Division should it not be able to place a patient who has been detained or committed.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS/LEGISLATIVE ACTION:**

- As long as King County keeps 85% of short term detentions and commitments (under 17 days) locally, Western State Hospital may not refuse to accept individuals detained by King County CDMHPs. Long-term commitments are the responsibility of the state and also may not be refused.
- King County must preserve the ability of CDMHPs to respond to requests for involuntary commitment investigations in a timely manner, and with adequate resources to do a thorough and professional job.